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THE **COST** OF HAVING A BABY

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In 1981, there were over 3.6 million births recorded in the U.S., a birth rate of 15.9 per 1,000 population. The birth rate in the U.S. declined from 25.3 per thousand in 1954 at the height of the Baby Boom to a low of 14.8 in 1975 and 1976. Since 1976 it has gradually edged up to the 15.9 level.

The medical costs associated with having a baby have risen consistently and steeply. According to the Consumer Price Index, between 1967 and 1982, the cost of all medical care items increased by 194.5%, physicians' fees rose by 199.0%, and prescription drugs by 72.5%. The component of the medical care system that has risen the most dramatically is the cost of a semiprivate room, which has nearly quintupled (381.1%) since 1967.

The Public Relations Division of the Health Insurance Association of America periodically has conducted surveys over the past decade to determine the cost of having a baby, including medical care prior to the birth, the cost of hospitalization and other attendant expenses for the mother and baby through the first week of life, such as clothing and furniture. The latest in the series, conducted in early 1982, surveyed nearly 200 hospitals and 75 midwives to determine the average cost of childbirth in various situations and regions of the United States.

The results of the 1982 survey were compiled according to rural or urban location in four geographical areas: the Northeast, the South, the North Central states, and the West.* As Tables 1 through 4 show, the cost differences between urban and rural areas within each region in most cases were as marked as the differences among geographical regions. The South generally had the lowest medical costs, and costs were consistently lower in rural areas of all regions.

**The geographical regions of the U.S., as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, include the following states:* Northeast—*Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont;* North Central—*Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin;* South—*Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia;* West—*Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming.*

The data from the survey show that the average per diem room and board rate ranged from $112.60 in the rural South to $191.20 in the urban West. Tables 1 through 5 show the average cost for a hospital stay for an uncomplicated usual delivery in rural and urban areas in various regions of the U.S. Wherever possible, the cost when using a birthing room rather than a delivery room is also shown.

The average length of stay for an uncomplicated delivery varied from 1.9 days in the rural West to 3.3 days in the rural Northeast and urban areas of the North Central states.

The average cost of the hospital stay (excluding physician fees) varied from $855.80 (birthing room) in the rural West to $1,697.90 (delivery room) in the urban North Central region.

Most births in this country occur by normal delivery; there has, however, been a growing trend in the number of cesarean deliveries over the past decade. Tables 1 through 5 also show the average cost of a hospital stay for an uncomplicated cesarean. If a cesarean section is necessary, the average total of hospital and physician charges can be expected to increase by at least 50%.

Tables 6 through 10 show the average charges for complete obstetrical care during the pregnancy and other professional services during delivery and hospitalization for both uncomplicated usual deliveries and uncomplicated cesarean deliveries, with the exception of the anesthesiologist's charge, which averages $150 nationally for a usual delivery. In addition to these charges, pediatrician's newborn care averages $64 nationally. Data on anesthesiologists' and pediatricians' fees are not available regionally. Table 11 shows the medical costs for having a baby through usual delivery and cesarean, excluding the anesthesiologist's and pediatrician's newborn care.

Thus, the average medical bill nationally for a usual delivery in a delivery room, including anesthesiologist's and pediatrician's newborn care fees, was $2,306.70.

Other approaches to childbirth are growing in popularity, and may also decrease the cost involved in having a baby. One of these is the use of a midwife's services. Table 12 shows the average length of stay in a hospital or birth center for childbirth under the care of a midwife. The stay is considerably shorter than when a physician is involved. The average professional fees for midwives in this survey shown in Table 13 were somewhat higher than those for physicians in most regions. This is due in part to the fact that the survey of physicians' fees was several months earlier than the survey of midwives' charges and reflects some

fees of nearly a year earlier.

Other large expenditures in having a baby include the baby's wardrobe, nursery furnishings, essential nursery and bath items, feeding equipment, and miscellaneous items such as vitamins, diapers, car seat, etc.

The Health Insurance Association of America surveyed national chain stores for the average cost of a baby's layette. The following list includes the basics in a layette.

Baby's Wardrobe and Nursery Items (excluding furniture)	$184.10
Nursery Furnishings*	464.80
Feeding Equipment	57.50
Bath Items	35.10
Miscellaneous	109.70
	$851.20

**Includes the cost of a crib, crib mattress and baby carriage.*

In addition, the mother's maternity wardrobe would amount to about $235. The cost of maternity clothing would likely be much higher for a working mother-to-be.

A good maternity package in a group health insurance plan can defray a high percentage of the expense for hospital and physician care. Most group medical insurance plans now include such coverage. According to a recent survey by the Health Insurance Association of America, more than 9 in 10 employees with maternity coverage under new group plans have benefits equal to those for any other medical condition.

TABLE 1

Average Cost of Maternity Hospital Stay in Urban & Rural Areas of the Northeast Region of the U.S., 1982

	Urban	Rural	Total
Usual Delivery			
Room and board (urban - 3.2 days at $174.60/day; rural - 3.3 days at $150.30; total - 3.2 days at $171.30)	$ 558.70	$ 496.00	$ 548.20
Nursery (urban - 3.2 days at $102.50/day; rural - 3.3 days at $112.00; total - 3.2 days at $103.80)	328.00	369.60	332.20
Labor Room	159.90	106.50	153.60
Delivery Room	256.10	282.10	260.00
Birthing Room (alternative to labor and delivery rooms)	302.70	NA	—
Circumcision Set-up	27.90	16.10	26.20
Anesthesia (equipment and supplies)*	74.00	27.50	68.50
Central Supplies	79.20	97.70	81.60
Pharmacy (mother and baby)	32.70	53.00	35.10
Laboratory (mother and baby)	90.80	80.30	89.60
Total—with Labor and Delivery Rooms	$1,607.30	$1,528.80	$1,595.00
Total—with Birthing Room	$1,494.00	NA	—
Cesarean Delivery			
Room and board (urban - 6.2 days at $174.60/day; rural - 5.7 days at $150.30; total - 6.1 days at $171.30)	$1,082.50	$ 856.70	$1,044.80
Nursery (urban - 6.2 days at $102.50/day; rural - 5.7 days at $112.00; total - 6.1 days at $103.80)	635.50	638.40	633.20
Labor Room	159.90	106.50	153.60
Delivery Room	256.10	282.10	260.00
Circumcision Set-up	27.90	16.10	26.20
Anesthesia (equipment and supplies)*	161.10	172.70	162.70
Central Supplies	159.40	221.70	167.50
Pharmacy (mother and baby)	120.60	169.30	126.70
Laboratory (mother and baby)	227.10	194.00	222.90
Total	$2,830.10	$2,657.50	$2,797.60

NA = Not Available

** A few hospitals quoted fees that include the professional services of a staff anesthesiologist, which measurably raises the average.*

TABLE 2

Average Cost of Maternity Hospital Stay in Urban & Rural Areas of the South Region of the U.S., 1982

	Urban	Rural	Total
Usual Delivery			
Room and board (urban - 3.1 days at $123.80/day; rural - 2.9 days at $112.60; total - 3.1 days at $119.00)	$ 383.80	$ 326.50	$ 368.90
Nursery (urban - 3.1 days at $83.80/day; rural - 2.9 days at $77.70; total - 3.1 days at $81.20)	259.80	225.30	251.70
Labor Room	103.60	103.50	103.60
Delivery Room	214.70	157.30	190.50
Birthing Room (alternative to labor and delivery rooms)	288.30	233.40	271.40
Circumcision Set-up	20.30	18.60	19.60
Anesthesia (equipment and supplies)*	61.70	67.60	64.20
Central Supplies	110.00	139.80	122.70
Pharmacy (mother and baby)	71.80	77.90	74.40
Laboratory (mother and baby)	89.10	104.60	95.60
Total—with Labor and Delivery Rooms	$1,314.80	$1,221.10	$1,291.20
Total—with Birthing Room	$1,284.80	$1,193.70	$1,268.50
Cesarean Delivery			
Room and board (urban - 5.7 days at $123.80/day; rural - 5.5 days at $112.60; total - 5.6 days at $119.00)	$ 705.70	$ 619.30	$ 666.30
Nursery (urban - 5.7 days at $83.80/day; rural - 5.5 days at $77.70; total - 5.6 days at $81.20)	477.70	427.40	454.70
Labor Room	103.60	103.50	103.60
Delivery Room	214.70	157.30	190.50
Circumcision Set-up	20.30	18.60	19.60
Anesthesia (equipment and supplies)*	129.00	129.30	129.10
Central Supplies	187.10	292.50	232.50
Pharmacy (mother and baby)	197.70	221.80	208.10
Laboratory (mother and baby)	176.80	178.10	177.30
Total	$2,212.60	$2,147.80	$2,181.70

** A few hospitals quoted fees that include the professional services of a staff anesthesiologist, which measurably raises the average.*

TABLE 3

Average Cost of Maternity Hospital Stay in Urban & Rural Areas of the North Central Region of the U.S., 1982

	Urban	Rural	Total
Usual Delivery			
Room and board (urban - 3.3 days at $175.70/day; rural - 3.2 days at $137.30; total - 3.3 days at $161.80)	$ 579.80	$ 439.40	$ 533.90
Nursery (urban - 3.3 days at $109.90/day; rural - 3.2 days at $94.30; total - 3.3 days at $104.10)	362.70	301.80	343.50
Labor Room	160.80	100.40	138.50
Delivery Room	318.40	201.10	274.40
Birthing Room (alternative to labor and delivery rooms)	329.30	194.50	288.30
Circumcision Set-up	24.50	19.30	22.60
Anesthesia (equipment and supplies)*	46.70	17.00	35.60
Central Supplies	62.30	95.80	75.40
Pharmacy (mother and baby)	53.00	58.20	55.00
Laboratory (mother and baby)	89.70	67.50	80.60
Total—with Labor and Delivery Rooms	$1,697.90	$1,300.50	$1,559.50
Total—with Birthing Room	$1,548.00	$1,193.50	$1,434.90
Cesarean Delivery			
Room and board (urban - 6.1 days at $175.70/day; rural - 5.7 days at $137.30; total - 6.0 days at $161.80)	$1,071.80	$ 782.60	$ 970.80
Nursery (urban - 6.1 days at $109.90/day; rural - 5.7 days at $94.30; total - 6.0 days at $104.10)	670.40	537.50	624.60
Labor Room	160.80	100.40	138.50
Delivery Room	318.40	201.10	274.40
Circumcision Set-up	24.50	19.30	22.60
Anesthesia (equipment and supplies)*	125.80	140.60	131.60
Central Supplies	139.40	218.50	171.00
Pharmacy (mother and baby)	131.20	167.60	146.00
Laboratory (mother and baby)	197.80	189.90	194.50
Total	$2,840.10	$2,357.50	$2,674.00

** A few hospitals quoted fees that include the professional services of a staff anesthesiologist, which measurably raises the average.*

TABLE 4

Average Cost of Maternity Hospital Stay in Urban & Rural Areas of the West Region of the U.S., 1982

	Urban	Rural	Total
Usual Delivery			
Room and board (urban - 2.4 days at $191.20/day; rural - 1.9 days at $152.10; total - 2.3 days at $183.70)	$ 458.90	$ 289.00	$ 422.50
Nursery (urban - 2.4 days at $127.00/day; rural - 1.9 days at $89.10; total - 2.3 days at $119.80)	304.80	169.30	275.50
Labor Room	168.70	132.70	161.50
Delivery Room	280.90	172.80	258.70
Birthing Room (alternative to labor and delivery rooms)	487.50	193.00	442.20
Circumcision Set-up	23.60	21.40	23.10
Anesthesia (equipment and supplies)*	42.50	8.60	38.60
Central Supplies	78.20	82.80	79.10
Pharmacy (mother and baby)	64.70	37.00	59.00
Laboratory (mother and baby)	96.20	54.70	87.90
Total—with Labor and Delivery Rooms	$1,518.50	$ 968.30	$1,405.90
Total—with Birthing Room	$1,556.40	$ 855.80	$1,427.90
Cesarean Delivery			
Room and board (urban - 5.0 days at $191.20/day; rural - 4.4 days at $152.10; total - 4.9 days at $183.70)	$ 956.00	$ 669.20	$ 900.10
Nursery (urban - 5.0 days at $127.00/day; rural - 4.4 days at $89.10; total - 4.9 days at $120.00)	635.00	392.00	588.00
Labor Room	168.70	132.70	161.50
Delivery Room	280.90	172.80	258.70
Circumcision Set-up	23.60	21.40	23.10
Anesthesia (equipment and supplies)*	130.90	77.10	119.50
Central Supplies	162.80	316.40	196.00
Pharmacy (mother and baby)	226.10	103.60	199.60
Laboratory (mother and baby)	196.10	138.90	184.00
Total	$2,780.10	$2,024.10	$2,630.50

** A few hospitals quoted fees that include the professional services of a staff anesthesiologist, which measurably raises the average.*

TABLE 5

Average Cost of Maternity Hospital Stay in Urban & Rural Areas of the U.S., 1982

	Urban	Rural	Total
Usual Delivery			
Room and board (urban - 3.0 days at $165.00/day; rural - 2.9 days at $128.80; total - 3.0 days at $153.60)	$ 495.00	$ 373.50	$ 460.80
Nursery (urban - 3.0 days at $105.60/day; rural - 2.9 days at $87.30; total - 3.0 days at $99.90)	316.80	253.20	299.70
Labor Room	146.40	106.30	133.50
Delivery Room	267.40	183.00	240.10
Birthing Room (alternative to labor and delivery rooms)	380.60	204.50	343.40
Circumcision Set-up	23.70	19.10	22.20
Anesthesia (equipment and supplies)*	55.20	44.90	52.00
Central Supplies	83.70	114.20	93.70
Pharmacy (mother and baby)	57.80	64.10	59.80
Laboratory (mother and baby)	91.50	83.30	88.80
Total—with Labor and Delivery Rooms	$1,537.50	$1,241.60	$1,450.60
Total—with Birthing Room	$1,504.30	$1,156.80	$1,420.40
Cesarean Delivery			
Room and board (urban - 5.7 days at $165.00/day; rural - 5.5 days at $128.80; total - 5.6 days at $153.60)	$ 940.50	$ 708.40	$ 860.20
Nursery (urban - 5.7 days at $105.60/day; rural - 5.5 days at $87.30; total - 5.6 days at $99.90)	601.90	480.20	559.40
Labor Room	146.40	106.30	133.50
Delivery Room	267.40	183.00	240.10
Circumcision Set-up	23.70	19.10	22.20
Anesthesia (equipment and supplies)*	134.50	128.70	132.50
Central Supplies	163.10	265.70	197.30
Pharmacy (mother and baby)	173.40	182.70	176.50
Laboratory (mother and baby)	196.50	177.60	190.20
Total	$2,647.40	$2,251.70	$2,511.90

* *A few hospitals quoted fees that include the professional services of a staff anesthesiologist, which measurably raises the average.*

TABLE 6

Average Cost of Professional Services in Urban & Rural Areas of the Northeast, 1982

	Urban	Rural	Total
Attending Physician:			
Usual Delivery	$653.40	$553.80	$639.70
Cesarean Delivery	826.70	626.50	799.10
Circumcision	51.80	44.50	50.80
Total:			
Usual Delivery	$705.20	$598.30	$690.50
Cesarean Delivery	$878.50	$671.00	$849.90

NOTE: Excludes anesthesiologist's professional fee, which averages $150 nationally for a usual delivery, and pediatrician's newborn care, which averages $64 nationally.

TABLE 7

Average Cost of Professional Services in Urban & Rural Areas of the South, 1982

	Urban	Rural	Total
Attending Physician:			
Usual Delivery	$598.60	$547.20	$576.50
Cesarean Delivery	785.00	726.90	760.00
Circumcision	46.80	41.80	44.60
Total:			
Usual Delivery	$645.40	$589.00	$621.10
Cesarean Delivery	$831.80	$768.70	$804.60

NOTE: Excludes anesthesiologist's professional fee, which averages $150 nationally for a usual delivery, and pediatrician's newborn care, which averages $64 nationally.

TABLE 8

Average Cost of Professional Services in Urban & Rural Areas of the North Central Region, 1982

	Urban	Rural	Total
Attending Physician:			
Usual Delivery	$544.40	$493.90	$526.10
Cesarean Delivery	735.60	668.00	710.40
Circumcision	44.70	39.40	42.80
Total:			
Usual Delivery	$589.10	$533.30	$568.90
Cesarean Delivery	$780.30	$707.40	$753.20

NOTE: Excludes anesthesiologist's professional fee, which averages $150 nationally for a usual delivery, and pediatrician's newborn care, which averages $64 nationally.

TABLE 9

Average Cost of Professional Services in Urban & Rural Areas of the West, 1982

	Urban	Rural	Total
Attending Physician:			
Usual Delivery	$714.50	$602.50	$693.10
Cesarean Delivery	931.60	791.00	904.80
Circumcision	50.50	45.00	49.50
Total:			
Usual Delivery	$765.00	$647.50	$742.60
Cesarean Delivery	$982.10	$836.00	$954.30

NOTE: Excludes anesthesiologist's professional fee, which averages $150 nationally for a usual delivery, and pediatrician's newborn care, which averages $64 nationally.

TABLE 10

Average Cost of Professional Services in Urban & Rural Areas of the U.S., 1982

	Urban	Rural	Total
Attending Physician:			
Usual Delivery	$623.50	$536.50	$596.10
Cesarean Delivery	816.30	708.40	782.40
Circumcision	48.10	41.60	46.00
Total:			
Usual Delivery	$671.60	$578.10	$642.10
Cesarean Delivery	$864.40	$750.00	$828.40

NOTE: Excludes anesthesiologist's professional fee, which averages $150 nationally for a usual delivery, and pediatrician's newborn care, which averages $64 nationally.

TABLE 11

Total Medical Costs of Having a Baby

	Usual Delivery		
	Delivery Room	**Birthing Room**	**Cesarean**
Northeast			
Urban	$2,312.50	$2,199.20	$3,708.60
Rural	2,127.10	NA	3,328.50
Total	2,285.50	NA	3,647.50
South			
Urban	1,960.20	1,930.20	3,044.40
Rural	1,810.10	1,782.70	2,916.50
Total	1,912.30	1,889.60	2,986.30
North Central			
Urban	2,287.00	2,137.10	3,620.40
Rural	1,833.80	1,726.80	3,064.90
Total	2,128.40	2,003.80	3,427.20
West			
Urban	2,283.50	2,321.40	3,762.20
Rural	1,615.80	1,503.30	2,860.10
Total	2,148.50	2,170.50	3,584.80
U.S.			
Urban	2,209.10	2,175.90	3,511.80
Rural	1,819.70	1,734.90	3,001.70
Total	2,092.70	2,062.50	3,340.30

NA = Not Available
NOTE: Excludes anesthesiologist's professional fee, which averages $150 nationally for a usual delivery, and pediatrician's newborn care, which averages $64 nationally.

TABLE 12

Average Length of Stay in Days in a Hospital or Birth Center for Childbirth Under the Care of a Midwife in Various Regions of the U.S., 1982

	Urban	Rural
Northeast	2.0	1.3
South	1.6	2.2
North Central	2.2	NA
West	1.1	2.1
Total U.S.	1.7	2.0

NA = Not Available

TABLE 13

Cost of Midwife Professional Charges in Urban and Rural Regions of the U.S., 1982

	Urban	Rural
Northeast	$762.30	$512.50
South	616.60	497.00
North Central	669.40	NA
West	800.40	685.70
Total U.S.	$715.70	$593.60

NA = Not Available

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